Aarhus University and the University of Edinburgh
Excellence in European Doctoral Education (ExEDE)

Case study

Title: PhD Planner

What was done:

During 2012 the first version of the PhD-administrative system PhD Planner was implemented at Aarhus University. The vision is to develop a new, joint PhD-system with consistent processes that support internationalisation and systematic quality assurance for all Graduate Schools.

PhD Planner is divided into two modules: a recruitment module for applicants and a talent management module for enrolled PhD students. PhD Planner is a role-based system with electronic support of working procedures, in which different actors as applicants, PhD students, administrative officers, supervisors, heads of programmes and heads of the Graduate Schools have an individual function regarding activities such as application process and half-year evaluation.

For the time being the electronic support of working procedures only includes procedures in regard to recruitment, creation of PhD plan and half-year evaluation. Additional processes, e.g., in regard to defense, are manually handled just as in the former PhD administrative systems. However, electronic support of these processes will be developed at a later time, just as integration between PhD Planner and other systems relevant to the PhD administration at AU is expected to be established.

PhD Planner is expected to yield the following benefits:
- A complete IT-supported PhD administration in all parts for the entire AU: for all PhD administrative officers at the faculties, for all PhD students and for all scientific officers (supervisors, programme committees, heads of the Graduate Schools).
- Consistency in processes for the administrative parts of the PhD study
- Compliance with the PhD declaration
- Support of internationalisation
- An improved managerial overview based on common definitions and practices
- Common reporting to Statistics Denmark
- A rationalisation of IT systems and not at least a larger consistency in PhD administrative processes across the new AU. This enables the PhD administrative officers to have a better opportunity to support each other across the faculties.
- Development of a flexible system that easily can be adapted to new/changed needs

Links to:
- Approaches to training and support for doctoral candidates and supervisors

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Motivation and aims:
The vision is to develop a new, joint PhD-system with consistent processes that support internationalisation and systematic quality assurance for all Graduate Schools.

Lessons learnt:
The PhD Planner is not yet fully implemented across faculties at the university. However a number of lessons have been learnt so far. The most important being that it is a very complex challenge to create a system that meets the needs of all users. The process of implementing the system is thus

timely and cannot be forced as relevant parties need to be involved. To ensure this the process has been coordinated by a project manager that refers to a steering committee. The Steering committee makes decisions about both the administrative and the academic areas, and must ensure that the solutions chosen meet the needs of the graduate schools and that decisions are made in accordance with the AU strategy. In addition to the steering committee a Super user group has been established. The super user group consists of two super users from each administrative centre as well as relevant participants from AU Information Technology. The super user group meets approx. every third week. Additionally, a number of sub group are connected to the super user group. These sub groups work with limited topics such as back log prioritising, specification of requirements and quality assurance of user guides.

Scalability and transferability:
The system is in principal transferable and based on a readymade system from an external developer. However the lesson from AU shows that the system has to be adjusted to meet the specific needs of an individual university, which can be costly in terms of both time and ressources.

Further information:
http://medarbejdere.au.dk/en/administration/researchandtalent/talentadministration/phd-planner/

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Work package titles and themes:

- International dimensions to examination, supervision and the doctoral experience
- Design and development of a doctoral supplement to cover broader activities, training and experiences with a particular focus on employability & mobility
- Employer engagement, including employers not traditionally associated with the recruitment of doctoral graduates
- Approaches to training and support for doctoral candidates and supervisors
- Dissemination and promotion

Note for authors:

These case studies will be made publically available via the project website and may be included in future project publications and reports (printed and online).

Project website: www.doctoralexcellence.dk

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